

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4903
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USINT BAGHDAD

S E C R E T BEIRUT 4021

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: LE, PFOR, PINT
SUBJECT: LEBANON INTERNAL: CONVERSATION WITH WALID JUMBLATT

1. SUMMARY: DRUZE LEADER WALID JUMBLATT SAYS HE IS
DEPENDENT ON IRAQ FOR SUPPORT AND IS FORCED TO FOLLOW IRAQI
LINE AS A RESULT, COMPLICATING HIS RELATIONS WITH SYRIA. HE
EXPRESSES CONVICTION MARONITES ARE PLANNING ERECT CHRISTIAN
STATE IN LEBANON, WITH ISRAELI AND WESTERN SUPPORT. HE IS
INTERESTED IN NATIONAL CONSENSUS, BUT NOT AT PRICE OF DRUZE
SELF-RESPECT. HIS FEARS OF MARONITE INTENTIONS ARE NOT
ENTIRELY GROUNDLESS; MARONITE SEPARATISM IS STILL ALIVE, AND
ISRAELI SUPPORT HELPS FEED IT. SAUDIS AND MARONITES ARE
MISSING A BET BY LEAVING WALID IN HANDS OF IRAQIS. END SUMMARY.

2. DCM LANE, MY WIFE AND SON AND I HAD LUNCH WITH WALID
JUMBLATT AND HIS MOTHER, MAY, AT MOUKHTARA AUGUST 12. MAY,
WHO HAD BEEN IN EFFECT BANISHED FROM MOUKHTARA FOR YEARS,
HAS REDECORATED PLACE AND REINSTITUTED DEGREE OF ORDER
INTO CRAZY MENAGE MAINTAINED BY THE LATE KAMAL JUMBLATT,
WHO, DURING HIS INDIAN PHASE, HAD INTERIOR WALLS PAINTED
OCHRE AND SERVED HIS GUESTS WITH GRESSES AND HERBS.

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SHE HAS NOT, HOWEVER, TAKEN OVER THE DOMINATING ROLE OF
SITT NAZIRA, KAMAL'S MOTHER, WHO RULED THE DRUZE WITH
THE STRENGTH AND SKILL WHICH SEEMS TO BE MUCH MORE THE
PART OF THE JUMBLATT AND ARSLAN WOMEN THAN OF THEIR MEN.
MAY TOLD MY WIFE THAT WALID IS TAKING HOLD AND THAT SHE
HOPES TO RETURN TO PARIS. THE CHUBBY BLONDE GIRL WALID
HAD IN TOW WHEN HE RETURNED FROM TUNIS ON AUGUST 5 WAS

NOT IN EVIDENCE. PERHAPS HIS MOTHER BANISHED HER
(ALTHOUGH SHE SAID SHE HOPED HE WOULD MARRY SOON).

3. ALTHOUGH WALID HAS BECOME SOMEWHAT LESS NERVOUS, HE STILL GIVES THE IMPRESSION OF A YOUNG MAN WHO IS QUITE UNSURE OF HIMSELF AND IT IS DEBATABLE WHETHER HE WILL IN FACT EVER BE ABLE TO ASSUME THE STORMY PETREL ROLE HIS FATHER PLAYED TO SUCH DESTRUCTIVE EFFECT. IT IS WELL TO REMEMBER, HOWEVER, THAT KAMAL ALSO HAD A RATHER WISPY BEGINNING AND THAT EVEN AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS POWER WAS DEPENDENT IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS ON THE UNQUESTIONING LOYALTY OF THE DRUZE AND ON SELF-SERVING FOREIGN SUPPORT RATHER THAN ON HIS QUALITIES OF NATIONAL LEADERSHIP.

4. WALID TOO IS DEPENDENT ON HIS LOYAL DRUZE AND ON OUTSIDE SUPPORT. WALID TOLD ME THE ONLY HELP HE NOW GETTING WAS FROM IRAQ. HE WOULD LIKE TO GET IT FROM OTHER SOURCES BUT THAT HAS PROVEN IMPOSSIBLE (IMPLYING HE GOT NOTHING FROM SAUDIS OR LIBYANS OUT OF HIS RECENT TRIP). THIS MEANT HE WAS OBLIGED TO FOLLOW THE IRAQI LINE TO A CERTAIN EXTENT, WHICH COMPLICATED HIS RELATIONS WITH SYRIA, AND HE HAD TO BE CAREFUL ABOUT THAT.

5. WALID EMPHASIZED HIS NEED TO PROTECT DRUZE COMMUNITY, WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS BEING SMALL BUT IMPORTANT TO HIM.
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HE SAID DRUZE WERE MORE LEBANESE THAN MARONITES, AND THEY WANTED TO HELP SAVE LEBANON. HE WAS INTERESTED IN A NATIONAL CONSENSUS, BUT NOT AT THE PRICE OF DRUZE SELF-RESPECT OR PARTICIPATION OF DRUZE AS EQUALS IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS.

6. WALID PROFESSED TO SEE DISTURBING PARALLELS BETWEEN THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE CREATION OF ISRAEL AND THOSE CONFRONTING LEBANON TODAY. THE CHRISTIANS, LIKE THE JEWS, WERE TRYING TO CREATE THEIR OWN STATE, WHERE THE MOSLEMS, INCLUDING THE DRUZE, WOULD BE SECOND-CLASS CITIZENS. THEY HAD SUPPORT FOR THIS FROM OUTSIDE. WHEN I REPLIED THAT THE IDEA OF A CHRISTIAN STATE WAS NOT PRACTICABLE, HE SAID THAT WAS WHAT PEOPLE HAD SAID ABOUT ISRAEL BACK IN 1948, BUT THERE IT WAS. PERHAPS IT WAS THERE BECAUSE OF THE UNEXPECTEDLY GENEROUS SUPPORT OF WORLD JEWRY, BUT CHRISTENDOM WAS LARGER THAN JEWRY AND WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE NO COMPUNCTION ABOUT SUPPORTING A CHRISTIAN STATE IN LEBANON. THE CHRISTIANS ALSO HAD A POWERFUL ALLY IN ISRAEL, WHICH WAS ALREADY SUPPORTING THEM MILITARILY. THE CHAIN WOULD BE COMPLETED WITH AN ALAWATE STATE IN THE NORTH.

7. WALID SAID HE HAD BEEN VISITED BY TWO DRUZE REPRESENTING THAT SECT IN ISRAEL WHO CAME TO PAY CONDOLENCES AND EXPRESS THEIR LOYALTY. THEY HAD POINTED OUT THAT HIS FATHER HAD NEVER CALLED UPON THEM TO BE DISLOYAL TO ISRAEL. RATHER HE HAD LET THEM BE GOOD CITIZENS OF THAT STATE. WALID INDICATED THAT HE WOULD CONTINUE HIS FATHER'S POLICY IN THIS REGARD, IMPLYING WITH A SHRUG OF THE SHOULDERS THAT THIS WAS A MANIFESTATION OF DRUZE WEAKNESS AS A MINORITY COMMUNITY.

8. I ASKED WALID WHETHER THERE HAD BEEN ANY PROGRESS ON RECONCILIATION IN THE SHUF. HE SAID THE CHAMOUNISTS HAD SHOWN NO INTEREST IN IT. MEANWHILE,
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THE CHRISTIANS WERE ARMING THEMSELVES AND WERE BEING GIVEN ARMS BY THE SYRIAN G-2 IN THE BEKAA, MAJOR GHANEM, WHO WAS PLAYING THE CHRISTIAN CARD. IT WAS A WORRISOME AND DANGEROUS SITUATION.

9. COMMENT: WHILE WALID'S FEARS MAY BE EXAGGERATED, IT WOULD BE WRONG TO DISMISS THEM OUT OF HAND. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE SIGNS THAT THE KFUR FRONT IS LOSING MOMENTUM (IT HAS BEEN UNABLE TO AGREE ON A NEW CONSTITUTION AND FRANGIE REPORTEDLY IS FED UP WITH THE KATAEB), EVENTUAL RECOURSE TO A CHRISTIAN MOUNT LEBANON SUPPORTED BY ISRAEL IS AN IDEA THAT IS STILL AT THE BACK OF MANY CHRISTIAN MINDS, AND THE FRONT OF SOME. THE EXISTENCE OF THIS HOLE CARD IS A FACTOR INCREASING THE RECKLESSNESS OF PEOPLE LIKE CHAMOUN, BASHIR GEMAYEL (WHO HAS JUST THREATENED TO SET THE REGION AFLAME) AND THE MARONITE LUNATIC FRINGE.

10. HAVING JUST MADE A TOUR OF THE NORTHERN MOUNT LEBANON, I AM IMPRESSED WITH THE DEPTH OF MARONITE NATIONALISM, AND WITH THE FANATICISM OF ITS ADHERENTS. THE MARONITE PSYCHOSIS IS DEEP, AND THE MARONITES ARE UNWILLING TO ACCEPT THE MOSLEMS AS EQUAL PARTNERS IN WHAT THEY STILL REGARD AS THEIR PRIVATE STATE. IN THIS CONTEXT, ISRAELI SUPPORT FOR MARONITES IN THE SOUTH BECOMES MORAL SUPPORT FOR MARONITE EXTREMISM IN THE NORTH, AND THE WELFARE OF THE LEBANESE STATE IS LOST SIGHT OF IN THE PROCESS. IF LEBANON IN ANYTHING LIKE ITS FORM FROM 1943 TO DATE IS TO BE PRESERVED, SOME ACCOMMODATION BETWEEN MARONITES AND OTHER MINORITIES NOW INHABITING THIS LAND MUST BE WORKED OUT. THE DRUZE, LED BY THE STILL MALEABLE WALID JUMBLATT, WOULD BE A GOOD PLACE TO START.

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11. IN IGNORING JUMBLATT, THE MARONITES AND THE SAUDIS ARE
MISSING A BET. SOMEONE OTHER THAN THE IRAQIS SHOULD BE
GETTING CLOSE TO HIM.
PARKER

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NNN

Message Attributes

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